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[789] The ceremony of excommunication, thabeit hmauk (literally, inverting the alms-bowl), is sufficiently solemn. The monks gather in a circle round the culprit, and the latter part of the Kammawā, that which is read to drive sickness and evil spirits out of a town, is gravely recited by the abbot, the surrounding brethren responding at the end of each sentence. When it is finished, his yellow-robes are taken off him, his alms-bowl is turned mouth downwards, and he is hurried out of the monastery limits. His condition is pitiable. No one may speak to him; no monk will take alms from him; he can neither buy nor sell; he is not allowed even to draw water from a well, or drink from the jars at a wayside zayat. He is as much an outcast as any pagoda slave, and grievous is the penance he must go through before he is once more received into the society even of laymen. It occasionally happens when there is much evil living in a district, or if the people are lax in their religious observances, that the brethren of the kyaung put the neighbourhood under a ban by inverting their alms-bowls, and refusing to go out begging. There is no greater proof of the power of the assembly than the rapidity with which this effects its purpose. The most careless are brought to a sense of their sinfulness in a few days. Such excommunication is, however, more and more rare.

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551 Before the death of the Lord Buddha, the yahans all addressed one another as awutthaw; but after he had attained the ne'ban of khan-das under the eng-gyin-bin (*Shorea robusta*), a recognition of relative rank was instituted. The inferiors, we are told, called the more advanced in the order, bante, while the juniors were addressed in their turn, by their proper name, or that of their family. In Burma, however, this regulation prevails only to a very slight extent. With the mendicants, as with the royalty, and indeed with the populace at large, it is considered uncivil to mention a person's name in conversation, and his rank, or the kyaung he belongs to, is used instead, or perhaps only the designation of his sacred profession. The laity indiscriminately address all wearers of the yellow robe as payā (lord).

792 Similarly the "punishment of Brahma," recommended by the great master to be employed against weaker brethren, is

CHAPTER XLV

SLAVES AND OUTCASTS

It is a work of the greatest possible merit to build a pagoda, and the founder, prefixing Payātaga to his signature, for the rest of his life is looked upon as certain to pass into ne'ban on the completion of this his present existence. Similarly a man acquires great kutho by repairing portions of one of the old national shrines, putting up a new umbrella on the summit, setting the steps that lead up to the platform in order, or even by simply gilding afresh a few square feet on a feast day. By doing any one of these things a man sets his balance of kan on the right side and gains the good opinion of his neighbours. It is, therefore, not unnatural that all foreigners should be struck with the fact that the regular servitors of the places of worship, those who sweep the platform, carry off dead leaves, broken branches, and litter generally, and keep the place in order, are not only slaves, but are regarded as outcasts with whom the rest of the community will have no dealings and whose society is contaminating. Not only is the original parakyun a slave for life, for no one, not even a king, can liberate him or provide a substitute in his place, but his descendants, till the cycle of Shin Gautama's religion shall have come to an end and all the relics shall vanish from the earth, all his children throughout the thousands of years that have to elapse, are fixed and settled slaves of the pagoda from their birth, and any one marrying a pagoda slave, even unwittingly, becomes himself, with all the children he may have had by a previous life, irremediably a parakyun. The reason no doubt lies in a conviction of the existence of original sin. It is desirable

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to have the pagoda attended to. A very small acquaintance with human nature induces the belief that this will not be done if individual effort is trusted to do the work. Therefore prisoners of war and others whom it is not convenient to put to death are dedicated to the service. So strict is the dedication that any one who attempts or connives at setting free a pagoda slave is condemned to misery in the lowest hell, awizi. The servitor of the shrine can be employed in no other duty than keeping it in order, and kings and great men are threatened with loss of power and dire destruction if they venture to employ such outcasts as servants, even in the meanest capacity.

Slavery of the familiar form known in semi-civilised countries formerly existed in Upper Burma, but the pagoda slaves are a perfectly distinct body. A person who sells himself, or is sold, by his relation for debt is in a very inferior position doubtless and cannot enjoy any very great privileges. But he can always work his release, and is not thereafter considered as lying under any particular stigma. But the parakyun are neither more nor less than outcasts. They are looked upon as unclean, and the rest of the community will have no intercourse whatever with them. So much [177.56] is this the case that under British rule, which has of course freed them from their compulsory servitude, they are still looked upon with no less aversion than they were when the country was independent, and though nominally free to do as they please, have to travel into districts where they are unknown before they can find employment even of the most menial kind.

It is no explanation of the taint that the original servitors were prisoners taken in war, condemned convicts, or people expressly sentenced to this office on account of hideous crimes. The reverence for the pagoda cannot be exceeded, why then should the care of it and the surrounding buildings be considered to make its compulsory guardians vile and degraded people? In the old autocratic days it was a common thing for a pious sovereign to set apart certain villages, or a stated number of houses in those villages, for the service of the pagoda, and the victims were selected, quite regardless of personal character, by the village head-

man from those who were unable to buy themselves off. The cloud, therefore, which hangs over such people is all the more singular. The feeling came out very strongly in the case of a man with slave blood in him, who was appointed by the local government to be a magistrate. Subordinates declined to act under him, and resisted all he did; the people were still more demonstrative, and petitions flowed in begging that the disgrace might be removed from their district. It was to English minds quite impossible that this should be done, and equally so that he should not receive support in the execution of his duties. The matter was far from being simplified by the natural feelings of resentment, showing itself in undue severity when occasion offered, which filled the victim of the popular clamour, and it was only by the exercise of great tact and patience that the English Deputy Commissioner was able to quiet the people, and after long persuasion gradually to set matters right. But the majority of parakyuns are far from being so fortunate. Here and there in Rangoon and Maulmein are a few men who have got into business, but it is only by carefully concealing their antecedents, and they live in constant terror that the few who know them will betray their secret and reduce them to ruin. The great bulk of the liberated, however—if they can be called liberated when they never had any direct master—find that the force of public opinion is too much for them and are driven to staying about the old source of their shame to obtain a living; they haunt the pagoda steps and sell offerings to the pious on their way to worship, candles and prayer-flags, incense-sticks, flowers, and fruit. Few of them now resort to their old source of food, the altars, where they used to dispute the ownership of the cold rice and victuals with the crows and the pariah dogs. In Upper Burma the sellers of gold-leaf and tagónlôn are often respectable, that is to say, free men, but in the low country so great is the fear of being mistaken for a parakyun that but very few but the destitute will sell their wares on the saung-dan. At the Shwe Dagôn, in Rangoon, the vendors are almost without exception of the unclean class.

Pagoda slaves are still universal at all the greater shrines. As might have been expected, many-pagoda'd Pagân is their

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greatest place. Here there is even a king of the parakyuns, and he enjoys a sorry mockery of state in the use of gold-embroidered sandals, permission to wear jewellery, and the shade of a gold umbrella when he walks abroad. But a free man meeting him in his grandeur would make no obeisance and would pass him by with a grin and a gibe. The origin of his sovereignty is told in an old tale which proves the antiquity of the custom and the tenacity with which the dedication is held to. A king of Pagān—which has not been a capital since the fourteenth century—had suspicions of the loyalty of a tributary sovereign, and invited him to the great and noble city with its towers of gold and silver of which Ser Marco Polo writes. This monarch seems to have had no fears, and came with but a small retinue. Then the Lord of the Golden Palace decreed a great feast, and when all were assembled at the Shwezigōn pagoda, seized his unfortunate vassal by the hair, and holding aloft his sword, dedicated the helpless man with all his followers and their descendants for ever to the service of the great shrine, where lies a cast of the Lord Buddha's jawbone. Hence the petty state of the slave-king and the great crowding of pagoda slaves to his dominions to share his privileges. It is difficult to say whether the class will die out, and it seems certain that there will be no new dedications. It is perhaps more probable that the Pagān temple slaves are the descendants of the Talaing King Manuha, who was brought here a prisoner with all his people and the sacred books, by King Anawrata from Thatōn. As it is they marry and increase. Besides the parakyun, equally among the outcasts were the executioners, jailers, and lictors in Mandalay; lepers and incurables of all kinds, coffin-makers, and those occupied with dead bodies and the graveyards; all deformed and mutilated persons and the lamaing, or government slaves, tillers of the royal lands. The tadaungsa are the nearest in character to the pagoda slaves, and were probably originally intended as a kind of reserve to draw from for a supply of servitors to the temples. They may not engage in any fixed occupation for their support, and are condemned to make their living by begging alone, but a few of them become very rich, for they wander all over the country and occa-

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sionally chance upon windfalls, but their wealth is of no use to them, for they can never retire, even in the extremest age. Like the pagoda slaves they have their headquarters in Pagān, and some of them are vehemently suspected of being runaway parakyuns from other parts of the country. But the advance in public estimation is of the slightest possible character. Among the sellers of nantagōn and other pagoda essentials, at the shrines of Rangoon, Prome, and Pegu, are here and there a few tadaungsa, tired of their wandering life; yet, notwithstanding the ill-favour with which they are regarded, they are never stinted for food.

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Lepers and others afflicted with loathsome diseases, deformed and mutilated persons, are regarded more with pity than with aversion, but they are not the less outcasts, and must live in villages by themselves, or with the tadaungsa and parakyun if indeed they do not scorn to do so. They usually line the pagoda steps on a duty or feast day, and receive abundant alms, every third or fourth worshipper dropping a handful of rice or a copper coin into the basket or platter laid before them. The dislike to maimed people is very singular, and led to curious incidents in the first and second Burmese wars. The wounded men brought into the field hospitals refused to have arms or legs amputated to save their lives, and it is a matter of not unfrequent occurrence even now, in the hospitals, for a man to tear off the bandages wrapped round the stump, that he may not survive his misfortune and become a shame to his family. In some parts of the province the taint, or even the suspicion of leprosy in a family, becomes a fertile source of villainy. If the suspected person or the head of the house be at all well-to-do, heavy sums are extorted by the headman of the place in return for permission to stay on in the village, and sometimes informers make a good thing in demanding hush-money. But no amount of payments could save a man badly affected with the disease from being driven out of the town. Even in large towns the aversion is equally strong, and unless the leper is a rich man he has to live in prescribed quarters among the outcasts already mentioned. Equally despised are all those who have anything to do with funerals, either in making the

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coffin or digging the grave. This occupation has therefore fallen almost exclusively into the hands of the old parakyun, and helps to keep alive the ancient feeling. It must be allowed that the ways of the sandalās do not in any way tend to conciliate the multitude.

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Finally there were the pagwet, the letyataung, or thaing-gyaing, the constables, jailers, executioners, lictors, mostly confined to the neighbourhood of the native kingdom Mandalay. These merited all the obloquy that could be cast on them, but their position of quasi-authority made them more secretly hated than openly flouted. They were never allowed to enter a free man's house, even in the exercise of their office; nor could they go within the walls of the palace stockade, but many a citizen smarted under the blows of the lictor's thaing, when a great man came round a corner suddenly, and the letyataung saw a chance for a back-hander with his fasces; and it was far too easy a matter for a man to get into jail in Mandalay to make it a wise proceeding to rail at the pagwet. It was an unlovely custom in Upper Burma which made the executioner both constable and jailer, and condemned him to live on his wits. The natural result was that he lived on the prisoners, and extorted the last pice out of his victim with threats of violence, or actual torture. Pagwet means a circle on the cheek, and this ring on the face implied that its bearer had been condemned for a capital crime, and was respited to become executioner. Others had devices descriptive of their offence tattooed on the chest, as luthat (murderer), thukho (thief), damya (dacoit or highway robber). An execution in Mandalay was a horrid sight. The "spotted man" danced round his victim, made feints with his sword and burst into fits of wild laughter or yells, to shake the doomed man's nerves. It must be admitted that the spectators were very little better. A skilful blow which just slit the skin and drew blood met with an approving shout. The pagwet, like other outcasts, was buried like carrion when he died, or perhaps was simply thrown out with the town offal.

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How does all this agree with the theory of Buddhism, that there is equality for all, and that the poorest man can raise himself to sublimest heights after death? The king

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he must feel himself strong enough to beat down the fire of passions and remain steadfast to the end, for a lutwet, a man who has put his hand to the plough and turns back again, exposes himself to infinitely greater danger towards his next existence than he who has remained throughout in the world. The monastery is a house of refuge not to be lightly sought, and, sad to say, even it is not open to the outcast.

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This doctrine of kan also accounts for the equanimity and callousness with which Buddhists view human misery and the taking of human life, notwithstanding the law which forbids the killing of even the smallest insect. They recognise apathetically the working out of inexorable destiny, and watch a man drowning in the river with undisturbed tranquillity, for they are not called upon or even justified in stirring a hand to prevent it. You cannot combat manifest fate.

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But the outcast may not in any case enter the monastery, not even as a scholar. Even that last chance is withheld from him. He is the connecting link with the state of animals, the highest state of punishment. He is considered no better than an animal in thought; he meets with less toleration in actual life. Were he bedizened to the eyes with costly silks and priceless jewellery no girl would look at him. His wealth is of no use. He is not allowed to build a pagoda, or even to supply fresh-water pots on a wayside stand. The monk would refuse his alms; the starving free-man beggar would scorn his bounty. They will no doubt gradually disappear under British rule, but there will be those who will regret it. They may have to work hard for their living.

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a handful of earth the grave-diggers fill up the grave. These sandalās are outcasts, the name being probably derived from the Sanskrit term for the lowest caste of the Hindoos. It is considered a mark of respect to wait till the grave is filled in, and when this is over, there is some conversation in the zayat over the refreshments, and then all make their way home. The pya-that, bamboos, and other paraphernalia are the perquisites of the sandalās, and they usually get all the alms intended for the poor, though at a great funeral there is often much competition for the pasos, turbans, and pieces of muslin given away in alms. It is to be observed that there is no tombstone put up; nothing to mark for future years where the grave was.

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Though burial is becoming common with all classes, the old method of cremation still prevails extensively in the jungle districts, and was invariable in Independent Burma when the deceased had attained considerable age. When the body is to be burned, mithingyothi, it is not necessary that the coffin lid should be fastened down, and sometimes there is no lid at all. The preparations and procession are identical with that for burial. The pyre is composed of billets of wood, laid two and two at right angles to each other, quantities of sweet-smelling woods being placed in the intervals. A few billets are placed above the coffin as well as below, and at the bottom of the funeral pile is usually an iron trough into which any unconsumed bones may fall. The pyre is kindled at various points by the nearest relations, and the sandalās stay by to see that it burns freely, and that all is consumed. When the fire has burnt out, two or three of the nearest of kin come and search about among the ashes for the bones. These are washed clean with cocoanut milk, and in the case of great people in Lower Burma of late years, often with lavender water, eau de cologne, or any of Atkinson's or Piesse and Lubin's scents. They are then wrapped up in clean white cloths, and placed in a newly made earthenware pot, which is not uncommonly gilt, or covered with pictures of sacred events taken from the birth stories. This is then taken back to the house temporarily.

For seven days after either kind of funeral, mourning

THE RISE OF A COURT DRAMA IN BURMA

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was prevailing in China and Tibet by about the third century A.D. In any case, the ever-increasing population, alien to Hindu culture, must have acted against the intensity of the Hindu influence. Moreover, Siam was one of the earliest converts from Hinduism to Buddhism which, especially after the great Buddhist missionary, Buddhagosa, who lived in the fifth century, was ousting Brahmanism in Indo-China. At the Siamese court, however, the Hindu tradition was very strong, and remained so even when the king and his courtiers had become Buddhists.

In Siam, as in the neighbouring regions, learning did not reach the people for a long time even though it flourished at the court. The Hindu tradition was not strong enough to prevent the courtiers from creating a native literature. Buddhism prevented the courtiers from looking upon the Hindu learning with a conservatism that would not have allowed imitations. In Cambodia and elsewhere native ideas could never shake off the dominance of Hindu culture, and no native literature could come into being until quite modern times. Moreover, the very fact that the Hindu tradition was strong prevented the survival of Sanskrit literature in those regions, for once the tradition was broken, only chaos resulted. To make it clear, I will take the Java shadow-play. Sanskrit dramatic representation gave rise to the Java shadow-play. Therefore, one would expect Java to preserve a Hindu dramatic literature to herself and to the world. But it failed to do so. The shadow-play of Java is interesting as a special kind of dramatic performance, and not as dramatic literature. The stories that are presented on the shadow-stage in Java are taken mostly from the Hindu epics, but they have very little dramatic structure. Yet originally they must have been developed Sanskrit plays. Of course, to begin with, the Sanskrit shadow-plays themselves were slight in structure, but by no means so crude as the Javanese ones. The Hindu tradition was so strong that once it was destroyed, not only did the Hindu drama in Java decay and disappear, but a native drama in a developed form failed to appear. Stories from Hindu sources as well as stories from native history and mythology are still shown on the Java shadow-stage, but the plays are all formless and crude. In Cambodia, where the Hindu tradition was indeed very strong and lasted much longer, some remnants of the developed Sanskrit drama are preserved, but the tradition was so strong that no native element could enter it. There, up to the present day, a State theatre, with a special minister

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of State, presents the *Ramayana*, and less frequently that play which the Burmese calls the *Eemang*.¹ Both are remnants of Sanskrit plays no doubt introduced by the early Hindu kings. Throughout the centuries, the two plays have been regularly presented with the full patronage of the king and all the splendour at his command. It is almost a ritual. During the intervening centuries, no fresh incentive had come from India, and no new element, no native element, was allowed to enter it; the result was that the Cambodian *Ramayana* soon lost its freshness. Cambodia, therefore, not only has no native drama; it also failed to preserve for posterity good examples of Sanskrit dramatic literature.

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To return to Siam. Even the courtiers did not look upon the Hindu tradition with too much awe and conservatism. They recognized and retained the vital elements of Hindu culture as far as possible so as not to clash with native and Buddhist elements. The results of such special circumstances are best seen in Siamese literature. The court encouraged and the courtiers produced romances based on and in imitation of Sanskrit-Hindu romances. Native ideas, native tales, and native mythology were introduced into works modelled on Hindu literary works. In drama, the Siamese did not produce native plays, and they retained the *Ramayana* as a play. But they introduced new ideas and kept alive the old. In dramatic literature, as in all other matters, the Siamese had to reject all that was contrary to Buddhism, and some were retained only after much alteration to suit new needs. A consideration of the Siamese play of *Rama* shows clearly the above facts.

The epic tradition was very strong in India and it prevented Sanskrit drama from rising to still greater heights. In the new Hindu regions of Indo-China and the Malay Archipelago epic tradition was equally strong, if not stronger. In India the Sanskrit drama was shackled by the epic tradition; in the new regions the drama was very probably entirely subordinated to the epic. The dramatic performances in Cambodia, in Siam, in Java, before modern influences came in, were based mostly on the *Mahabharata* or the *Ramayana*. Perhaps it is legitimate to assume that the Sanskrit plays introduced into the new Hindu kingdoms were mostly those based on the epics: mostly, but not all. For the *Eemang*, which is very probably from Hindu-Sanskrit sources, tells a story unconnected with the two epics.

¹ This is explained in the next section.

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BURMA

131 Burma possessed no staples of trade to encourage

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2. LANDING-STAGE IN THE TIDAL REGION.

enterprise of the peaceable sort. Left entirely to her own resources, she developed her character in independence. It preserves a large measure of its original freshness and charm.

Detached though Burma lay from the contact of other civilisation, the seed-corn of a spiritual influence was brought to her shore from afar, and took root and spread until it pervaded her whole life. The one extraneous influence under which she fell proved of a paramount order. But the inspiration of Buddhism was broadly human, not racial. Every people might take its message to heart in their own individual way. The restraints it enjoined and the ideals it held up became the occasions for Burma to unfold her own inmost nature. The abounding treasury

of Buddhist legend furnished the subjects to exercise her poetic fancy. In the fifth century. A.D. long after Buddhism had declined at its source in India, and when it only prevailed in Ceylon, its real progress began among the people who were to give it an enduring home. Buddhism is popularly credited with five hundred millions of adherents. But the seven millions of Burma and perhaps a twentieth of that number in Ceylon, together with the half million Jains of India, are the practical Buddhists of the world. With the rest the profession has sunk to an empty name, as in China and Japan, or it is lax, as in Slam, or it is utterly transformed, as in Tibet.

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The phrase *Further India* gives point to a wide misconception. The surprise of so many persons on finding that the Burmans have no *caste*—to take the commonest instance—betrays the notion that Burma is part of India

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3. RUINS OF CITY DATE, PAGAN.